

your health

May 2010



Living With Allergies

Sneezing, sniffles, runny or stuffy nose, watery and itchy eyes, headache—these symptoms are all too familiar to allergy sufferers. Seasonal allergic rhinitis, commonly called hay fever, can leave you feeling sick and desperately searching for relief. When you have an allergy attack, your body is responding to dust, animal dander, pollen or other substances from sources such as grasses, trees and flowers. If you are uncertain about what's causing your allergic reactions, keep a journal noting your surroundings at the time an episode occurs to see if any patterns develop.

You Can Run But You Can't Hide

It is impossible to completely avoid allergy-inducing irritants, but you can minimize exposure.

- Stay inside when the pollen count is high.
- Keep windows closed and use air-conditioning as much as possible.
- Replace air-conditioning and heating filters often.
- Use indoor air cleaning systems.
- Keep humidifiers clean and free of mold.

- Think about removing carpets—they accumulate allergens 100 times more than bare floors.
- Remember, pollen settles on your pet's fur; hugging your hound might aggravate your symptoms.

Some Medication Options

Prescription and over-the-counter medications can provide relief from symptoms but both have some side effects. Always check with your physician to see what's right for you. Read and follow all instructions and warnings.

Antihistamines: Reduce swelling, itching, sneezing, watery eyes, excessive mucus. *Possible side effects:* Drowsiness and dry mouth.

Decongestants: Relieve swelling. *Possible side effects:* Can cause nervousness or drowsiness; can increase blood pressure in high dosages.

Corticosteroids (nasal spray form): Relieve nasal congestion. *Possible short-term effects:* Can cause stinging; if improperly used, can damage nasal tissue. *Possible long-term effects:* Studies are underway, consult your physician.

Allergy shots: Decrease allergic response; usually weekly shots given over a long period of time.

Allergies and Sinusitis

Sometimes a bout of allergies, or a cold, can turn more serious. *Sinusitis*, an infection or inflammation of the sinuses, may start as simple nasal congestion or it can be triggered by cigarette smoke. Blocked nasal passages permit bacteria to grow, causing an infection to develop.

Recognizing Sinusitis

- Headache or feeling of heaviness in your head and face
- Tenderness around eyes, nose or cheekbones
- Ear pressure or popping
- Yellow-greenish post-nasal discharge
- Fever
- Teeth ache but no dental problem is present
- Stuffy nose
- Morning sore throat that improves after you are up a while
- Dry cough that's worse when lying down or in the morning

Home Treatment Tips for Allergies and Sinusitis

- Use a humidifier to keep nasal passages moist
- Drink lots of fluids, especially when taking allergy medications
- Avoid smoke and other pollutants
- Don't blow your nose too hard; it can spread infection internally
- Keep your head elevated to help sinuses drain
- Take nasal decongestants early, before symptoms worsen and do so only if you do not have a medical condition which prohibits the use of decongestants

Consult your doctor if fever develops or if pain or other symptoms increase or do not respond to home treatment.

Whether it's allergies, sinusitis or other health concerns, Care24's registered nurses can answer your questions and provide helpful information—24 hours every day—at no cost to you.

With myuhc.com®, UnitedHealthcare's consumer Web site, you can access an array of health information that will help you answer important questions.

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After becoming a UnitedHealthcare® member, the quickest way to find a physician, specialist or hospital in the UnitedHealthcare network is to go online to myuhc.com®.

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2. Once in the site, click on the Physician & Facilities tab or the large Find a Doctor button located on the center of the page
3. Under Search for Care in Your Network, select find a Physician, Hospital, Urgent Care or Other Facility
4. Follow the easy directions via the form to help you define your search. You can search by

Location, Specialty, Physician Name, Condition or Procedure

5. Click on the Continue or Search button

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Live Nurse Chat

Live nurse chats are a fast, easy way to get answers to your health questions.

You can have a live, personal online discussion with a nurse about various health and wellness issues. Learn more about fitness, nutrition, common illnesses and conditions, prevention tips and much more.

During your chat, the nurse can display web pages and suggest other helpful resources related to the topic you're discussing. At the end of the chat, you can request a transcript of your conversation and Web pages for future reference.

Keep in mind that any symptoms you may be having are best addressed by calling your doctor. Live chat nurses can only assist with your general health questions due to the limits of online chat technology.

Live Nurse Chat sessions are securely operated, and private, with access granted only to you and the nurse. Your chat will be personal and anonymous. If you have

questions about your privacy, feel free to ask the nurse about them, in addition to reviewing the privacy policy, before you start your session.

Using Live Nurse Chat is easy:

- Log on to myuhc.com and click "Live Nurse Chat" link
- Provide a name – most people use their first name
- Enter your age and gender
- Select "Continue" if you accept the Terms and Conditions to chat with a nurse

You then will be connected with a nurse, who can help you answer your health questions.

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